

State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC)

1900 Williams Street - P.O. Box 4789

Helena, MT 59604-4789

Telephone: (406) 841-3911 Fax: (406) 841-3966

Situation Report for August 18, 2007

(issued @ 1500 hrs.)



2007 FIRES

Report Includes:

- Background Information
 - Fire Restrictions & Closures
 - Air Quality
 - Road Closures/Travel Restrictions
- Current Incident Situation
- New Large Fires
- Weather
- State Declarations
- Local & Tribal Declarations
- Local Government & Tribal Emergency Operations
- Requests for State Financial Assistance

- Fire Management Assistance Grants
- EMAC Resources Committed
- Summary of State Resources Committed

Important Websites:

State of Montana Fire Information:

<http://mt.gov/fire.asp>

National Interagency Fire Center

http://www.nifc.gov/fire_info/nfn.htm

Northern Rockies Coordination Center

<http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/>

Inciweb -- Incident Information System

<http://www.inciweb.org/state/27/>

I. Background Information

Since June, hot and dry weather has dominated the region creating very high to extreme fire conditions. Fire Indices are at an all time high while fuel moistures are low. Accompanying the high indices are weather patterns that have set the conditions for lightning and lightning caused starts. High pressure weather patterns over the region are responsible for the high temperatures and little to no moisture. Occasional cold fronts push through the region causing severe lightning storms that ignite wildfires. Rain has accompanied some of these fronts but a return to a high pressure system mitigates any moisture that fell.

Long Range Predictions

Above normal significant fire potential is forecast for most of the Area during August. Fuel moisture conditions should improve during the September through November time period except for eastern Montana. In many areas across western Montana and northern Idaho, downed dead woody fuel moistures are drier than normal and Energy Release Component indices are running near or above record levels and well ahead of normal for this time of year. The Climate Prediction Center's forecast calls for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation during August, especially over western portions of the Area. Wind

events are likely to increase during August as well. Abundant fine fuels are rapidly curing in eastern Montana and will likely increase the probability for large fire problems during August and into the fall months. **The ERC indices for Southwest Montana continue to set records!**

Fire Contracting: Inquiries regarding contracting fire equipment and other fire resources should be directed to the interested party's local dispatch center or Geographic Area Coordination Center see:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/fire/nrcg/agree-contract/signup.html>

Fire Restrictions & Closures: Portions of the state are currently under Stage I or Stage II Fire Restrictions. For definitions of these restrictions, see:

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/stageI.pdf>

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/stageII.pdf>

Fire Restrictions in Effect (for specific areas):

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/index.html>

Air Quality & Smoke: The Montana Department of Environmental Quality issues a daily forecast and discussion of potential smoke impacts throughout the state. The forecast can be accessed at <http://www.deq.state.mt.us/fireupdates/index.asp>.

Road Closures & Travel Restrictions: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/reports/alerts.shtml>

Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks

[Current Fire Restrictions](#)

[Drought & Fire Updates](#)

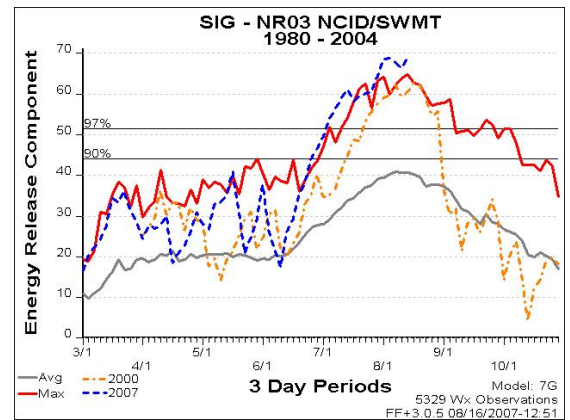
[Drought & Fire News](#)

Department of Revenue

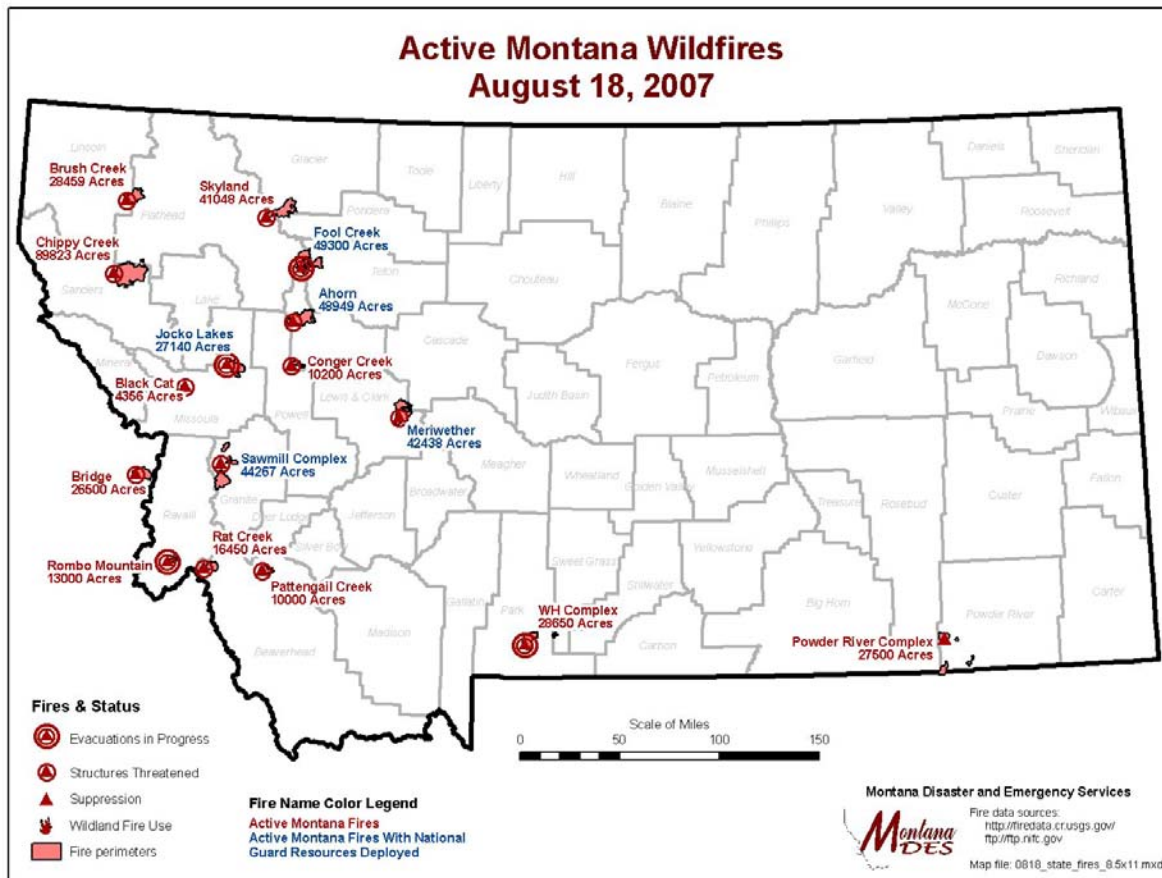
<http://mt.gov/revenue/forindividuals/taxrelieffordisaster.asp>

Department of Agriculture

<http://agr.mt.gov/crops/hayFirst.asp>



II. Current Incident Situation - Incidents listed according to current NRCG priority. (This report includes summary information for Montana fires that are currently greater than 100 acres in size. Fires are being dropped from this report once they reach 100% containment.) We have included a link to fire perimeters for the several of the incidents: http://dma.mt.gov/des/Fire_Perimeter_Maps.asp.



Currently assigned to Montana incidents are:

Area Command Teams	-	1
Type 1 IMT's	-	6
Type 2 IMT's	-	7
Fire Use Management Teams	-	4

The Area Command Team (Zimmerman) that had been assigned to Northern Rockies Coordination Center (Missoula) is now reassigned to help with incident prioritization and resources allocation for fires in Southwestern Montana.

Black Cat is located between Highway 93 and Mill Creek, approximately 2 miles SW of Evaro, Montana. Martin's Type 1 IMT is assigned (under Unified Command with Frenchtown FD). The Black Cat Fire blew up Thursday evening under the influence of a thunder cell. Current size estimate is **4,536 acres with 0% containment**. Approximately **203** personnel are assigned, plus mutual aid resources from local fire departments. **A total of seven (7) unoccupied structures were lost, but at this time, no primary residences have been reported as destroyed.** On the Frenchtown side of the fire, evacuations along

Mill Creek Road (above and including Spring Hill Road) are still in effect. Evacuations for the Evaro/Highway 93 side include Beargrass Mountain Road and Grooms Road in the Evaro area and Highway 93 from mile marker 3.5 to mile marker 6.

Jocko Lakes started on CSKT lands (Flathead Agency, BIA), twenty-six miles NE of Missoula; 8 miles W of Seeley Lake. Wilcox's Type 1 IMT is in command of the incident. The Jocko Lakes Fire is **27,140 acres and 20% contained**. Personnel assigned: **1,077**. Community of Seeley Lake, surrounding area, Pyramid Lumber Mill and cell tower are threatened. Some evacuations (west of Seeley Lake) have been lifted. HWY 83 is opened to through traffic. An American Red Cross Shelter remains opened at the Bonner Elementary School. Structures (8) have been lost.

Last evening Wilcox's IMT assumed command of the Ovando Point Fire on the Lolo National Forest.

*A **Fire Information Hotline** has been established at the Missoula County Fire Information Call Center from **9:00 am to 9:00 pm** at: **(406)258-3680**. A **24 hour recorded message can be found at (406) 258-4271**.*

Chippy Creek is located forty-two miles southwest of Kalispell, and 24 miles N of Thompson Falls, MT (Northwestern Land Office, Montana DNRC). Bennett's Type 1 IMT is in command. Size is **89,823 acres with 30% containment**. Personnel assigned: **614**. Numerous homes remain threatened. Evacuations and Area Closures remain in effect.

Sawmill Complex is located on the Lolo and Beaverhead – Deerlodge National Forests. The four fires in this complex extend from approximately 22 miles SE of Missoula to an area approximately 23 miles WSW of Phillipsburg, MT. The complex includes a total of **44,267 acres with 15% containment**. The complex consists of the Sawmill Creek (6,499 ac), the Wyman #2 (30,398 ac), the Fisher Point (7,371 ac), and the **Signal Rock 07** (600 ac) fires. McNitt's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Personnel assigned: **506**. Numerous residences and other structures remain threatened. Use Restrictions and Road Closures are in effect within the Rock Creek drainage.

WH Complex – This complex is composed of two fires previously reported as the Wicked Creek Fire (23,750 ac) and the Hicks Park Fire (1,900 ac). These fires are located 27 miles S of Livingston, and 10 miles SE of Emigrant, MT. Total size of the complex is **28,650 acres with 8% containment**. Stanich's Type 1 IMT is assigned. Personnel Assigned: **360**. Structures remain threatened, Area Closures are in effect, and evacuations are still in place.

Rat Creek is located on the Beaverhead/Deerlodge NF, twenty-five miles west of Wisdom, MT. Molhoek's Type 2 IMT (also managing the Pattengail Creek Fire) is assigned. The fire is now **16,450 acres and is 0% contained**. Personnel assigned: **134**. Structures are threatened. Park buildings, infrastructure, and cultural resources in the Big Hole National Battlefield are threatened. The Big Hole National Battlefield is **re-opened** to the public during normal business hours (9:00am-6:00pm) but will remain ready to evacuate if necessary. Other evacuations are in effect. A closure of the Tie Creek and Placer Creek road systems remains in effect. Highway 43 could be impacted.

Fool Creek on the Lewis and Clark and Flathead National Forests, approximately 30 miles NW of Choteau. Fire is now 49,300 acres with 0% containment. Personnel assigned: 123. * Whitney's Type 1 Team (* also managing the Ahorn Fire), is assigned. Several outbuildings, including a ski resort remain threaten (7 outbuildings have burned). Evacuations and road closures remain in effect.

Powder River Complex (10 fires) is thirty five miles southeast of Ashland. Johnson's Type 2 IMT is assigned. The complex is 27,500 acres with no report on containment. Personnel assigned: 343. No structures are currently threatened (2 structures have burned).

Rombo Mountain is located in the Bitterroot NF. The fire is located eighteen miles south of Darby, MT. Svalberg's Fire Use Management Team is assigned. Estimated size is 13,000 acres with 0% containment. Personnel assigned: 183. The team has will assumed management of the Bitterroot Fire Use Complex (16 Wildland Fire Use fires encompassing approximately 9,000 acres). Some residences, Painted Rocks State Park and other commercial property remain threatened. Precautionary evacuation notices (stage 1) have been issued. Area closures remain in effect for areas around Rombo Mountain and W of West Fork Road.

Brush Creek is located on the Flathead NF, twenty-five miles west of Whitefish, MT. Brush Creek is 28,459 acres with 70% containment. Hill's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Personnel assigned: 578. Residences and outbuildings remain threatened. Good Creek community may be evacuated if the fire grows.

Skyland is located on the Flathead NF near Summit. Pendleton's Type 1 IMT is assigned. Fire is 41,857 acres with 54% containment. Personnel assigned: 556. Two structures are confirmed lost, numerous residences remain threatened. Evacuations for all areas have been reduced to Level 1.

Ahorn Fire on the Lewis and Clark National Forest in Lewis and Clark County is being managed by * Whitney's Type 1 Team (* also managing the Fool Creek Fire). Fire is transitioning to a SW FUMT today. Current size is estimated at 48,949 acres and is 6% contained. Personnel Assigned: 280. Structure protection for residences and guest ranches in the Benchmark, Gibson, and Sun Canyon areas continue.

Meriwether located on the Helena National Forest in and around the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness. Carpenter's Type 3 organization is assigned. Current size is estimated at 42,438 acres with 75% containment. Personnel Assigned: 126. No structures are currently threatened.

* **Calbick** is located on the Flathead National Forest, approximately 20 miles South of East Glacier, MT. A Type 4 organization (Flint) is assigned. The Fire is approximately 300 acres in size, with 0 % containment. No structures are currently threatened, but structure protection measures have been initiated for the Schafer Meadows area.

Pattengail Creek on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF, 10 miles NE of Wisdom. The Pattengail Creek Fire is 10,000 acres and 0% contained. Molhoek's Type 2 IMT (also managing the Rat Creek Fire) is assigned; with 57 personnel. 12 structures could be threatened.

Conger Creek on the Lolo National Forest, approximately 20 miles north of Ovando. The fire is **10,200 acres with 0% containment**. Doebling (Type 3 IC) is assigned with **21** personnel. 13 outbuildings are threatened.

*** NEW FIRES (Emerging Extended Attack Fires over 100 acres in size)**

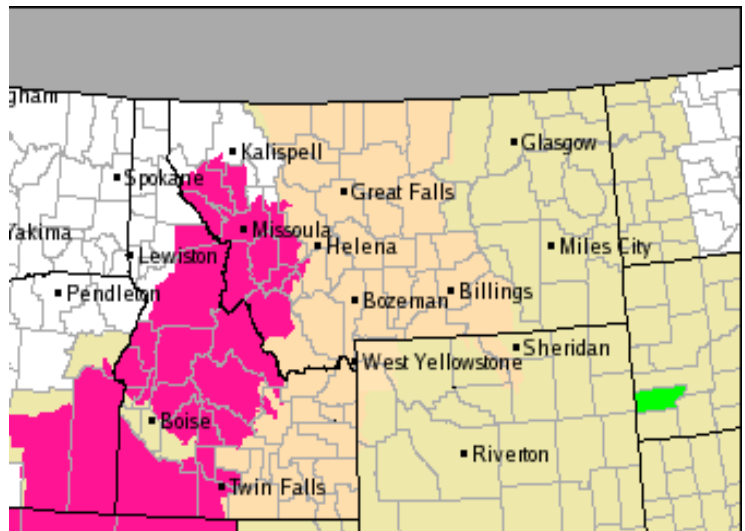
III. Weather

Red Flag Warnings and/or Fire Weather Watches:

Today the National Weather Service (Missoula) has issued a **Red Flag Warning** for western portions of Montana.

The red flag warning (in effect from 3 pm MDT this afternoon until 9 pm MDT this evening) is for gusty winds and low humidities (zones 103 106 107 108 and 109).

Southwest winds are expected to increase across the Selway-Bitterroot wilderness area of central Idaho and west-central Montana this afternoon through early evening. Sustained southwest winds 10 to 20 mph with humidities ranging from 10 to 18 percent will create very active burning conditions later this afternoon into the early evening hours. Some gusts to up to 25 mph can be expected over the exposed ridges.



Stronger westerly winds are expected Sunday afternoon into early evening. However, higher humidities, cloud cover and potential shower activity is expected to offset the negative impact of winds.

NWS also issued a **Fire Weather Watch** covering most of central Montana (in effect from Sunday afternoon through Sunday evening).

Relative humidities will decrease significantly this afternoon as Southwest winds aloft mix to the surface. Sustained southwest winds 10 to 20 mph with gusts to 25 mph are expected.

Even stronger winds are expected Sunday afternoon and early evening as a weather system moves through just to the north of the area. The air mass will remain quite dry with afternoon humidities dipping into the teens and lower 20s. West to southwest winds 15 to 25 mph with gusts to 35 mph are possible during this period.

Definitions of a Fire Weather Watch and a Red Flag Warning:

A fire weather watch or red flag warning is issued when the combination of dry fuels and weather conditions support extreme fire danger. These products are written for land and fire managers to highlight the increased fire danger.

A fire weather watch is issued up to 72 hours before the above conditions are expected to occur.

A red flag warning is issued when the conditions above are occurring or expected to occur within the next 24 hours. <http://www.weather.gov/>

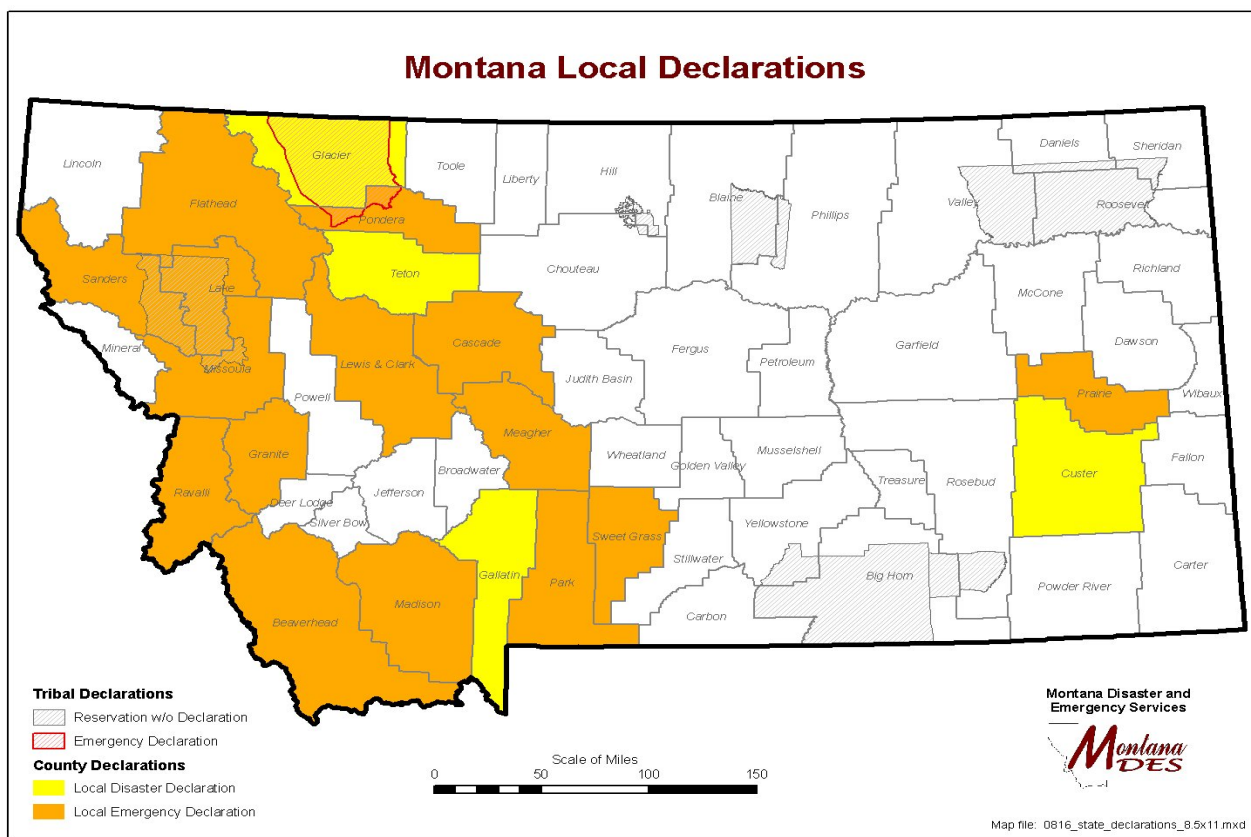
Weather Forecast For current Fire Weather Predictions, see the Daily Outlook at:
http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/daily_outlook.pdf

Fire Behavior Forecast For current Fire Behavior Predictions, see:
http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/fire_behavior/fire_behavior.pdf

IV. State Declarations

- Statewide Declaration of a Wildland Fire Emergency

V. Local and Tribal Declarations



- **State of Emergency.** The following jurisdictions have declared a state of emergency:

Lewis and Clark	Ravalli
Lake	Granite
Cascade	Missoula
Flathead	Sanders
Prairie	Beaverhead
Pondera	Blackfeet Nation
Sweet Grass	Park
Madison	Meagher

- **Disaster Declaration.** The following jurisdictions have declared a wildfire disaster:

Teton	Gallatin
Glacier	Custer

VI. Jurisdictional Emergency Operations

- The Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operation Center was activated on July 19, 2007.
- The Flathead County Emergency Operations Center was activated on August 2, 2007.
- The Teton County Emergency Operations Center was activated on August 2, 2007.
- The Missoula County Emergency Operations Center is activated. Missoula County has a call center in place for public information. The phone number is 406-258-3680.
- The Granite County Emergency Operations Center has been activated.
- The Sanders County Emergency Operations Center is activated but mobile in the area of the Chippy Creek Fire.
- The Sweet Grass County Emergency Operations Center was activated on 8/12/07.
- The Powder River County Emergency Operations Center was activated on 8/14/07.

VII. Requests for State Financial Assistance

- N/A

VIII. Fire Management Assistance Grants

- Jocko Lakes FEMA-2718FM-MT approved 8/4/07
- Black Cat FEMA-2721FM-MT approved 8/16/07

IX. Emergency Management Assistance Compact Resources Committed

- EMAC A-Team is assigned to the MT State Emergency Coordination Center.
- Two HEMTT aviation refuelers from Colorado National Guard are in Helena to support the Montana Army National Guard.

X. Summary of State Resources Committed (through the SECC)

- MT-DES currently has two employees deployed with Incident Management Teams (through the Northern Rockies Coordination Center).
- Montana Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk modules have been deployed for initial attack to:
 - Kalispell
 - Missoula
 - Helena
- One Montana Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook and module has been deployed to assist with fire support on the Meriwether Fire.
- Montana National Guard Security Teams have been assigned to:
 - Meriwether Fire
 - Sawmill Complex
 - Jocko Lake (2 teams)
 - Fool Creek Fire
 - Black Cat Fire
- Montana Highway Patrol resources are assigned (as requested) to assist in traffic control and law enforcement support of large fires.
- Starting on July 20, 2007, at 0700 the SECC was staffed and activated to a Level III status with extended hours (0700-1900), seven days a week. The SECC remains at Level III. Outside of those hours, the MT DES staff Duty Officer is available 24 hrs and may be reached at (406) 841-3911.